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BOOK REVIEWS

Les Fonctions Mentales dans les Sociétés Inférieures. By L. LÉVY-BRÜHL. Paris: Félix Alcan, 1910. 8°, pp. 455.

In the introduction, the author takes issue with writers of the English school, Tylor, Frazer, Lang, who postulate a psychic unity of mankind, and are thus led to elevate the doctrine of animism to the rank of a general principle of interpretation of primitive beliefs. The account these authors give of the origin of savage beliefs, argues Bruhl, is too individualistic and rational. They abstract the savage from his social environment and make him ask questions such as why? or how? which he then answers in conformity with his undeveloped psychology which, however, is governed by laws essentially similar to those of our own psychology. The emotional and volitional elements of the processes involved are unduly neglected. Moreover, the complexity of the mental make-up of the primitive man is distinctly underrated. What in Bruhl's opinion is the fundamental question these writers do not ask at all, viz.: Are the mental processes of the savage strictly comparable to our own? This question Bruhl does not hesitate to answer in the negative. Human mentality is in the main a social, a collective product. The social environment of the savage differs from that of the civilized man, hence, his mentality must be different. The author proposes to investigate some types of primitive collective mentality in order to ascertain its dominant characteristics.

The first part of the work deals with the collective "representations"¹ in the perceptions of primitive peoples, and their mystic character. The psychic processes of the primitive are relatively undifferentiated; hence the complexity of these processes, for motor and emotional elements form an integral part of them.

An object used in a religious ceremony, e. g., becomes saturated with religious or magical associations, and they henceforth become part of the essence of that object no matter in what context it may appear. This holds true of all living beings, objects, natural phenomena, which enter into primitive collective "representations." Hence, the entire material world throws a peculiar picture on the psychic screen of the primitive man, a picture which

¹ The author uses the term "representations" in the sense of *Vorstellungen*. "Concepts" would not cover the meaning, nor would "perceptions." Hence I prefer to use Bruhl's term "representations."

to us appears as unreal, as mystical. For want of a better term the author uses the word *mystical* to designate that general trait of primitive mentality.

The question, how does the savage explain to himself a given natural phenomenon, can never arise if we eliminate from the outset the wrong postulate that he perceives phenomena as we do. The savage does not seek for an explanation of his perceptions for it is implied in the mystic elements of his collective "representations" (p. 39).

As animate objects share their mystic properties with inanimate objects, the distinction between the two sets of phenomena becomes of slight importance, and is, in fact, often neglected. The close associations of object and image, or of name and thing named, which are familiar to all students of primitive man, must be accounted for along the same line of common mystic properties. Similar connections exist between object and shadow, or dream and real life. Here the author justly emphasizes the fact that savages do not, as is often assumed, confuse dreams with reality. On the other hand, however, dreams for them are as real as life, and dream visions are even a privileged class of experiences for they are particularly rich of mystic content. The same is true of the visions and hallucinations of inspired individuals. Those objective properties of objects which we use as guides for recognition and classification are of relatively slight importance to the savage. Objective experiences are only in part responsible for his beliefs, nor are they able to disillusion him when it comes to a sudden clash between faith and reality, for any discrepancy is easily explained away along the line of some familiar mystic association.

In vain should we search for the fundamental principle of primitive mentality in the precepts of our logic, or of any logic. Such a fundamental principle the author finds in the *law of participation*. The bond between the Central Australian native and his *churinga*, that between a clansman and his totem, or that between an individual animal and the species, may serve as illustrations of the concept of participation. The connection assumed is in all cases of a mystic character. Influence by contact, by transfer of power, by sympathy, by action, directly or at a distance, are other instances of mystic *rapport*. The principle of participation conflicts with our logic in so far as it is relatively indifferent to the law of contradiction. The one may yet be the many, the visible existence of an object does not exclude its invisible existence, a Bororo may also be an *arara*, a deer may be identical with corn and with a feather, etc. Bruhl is thus led to characterize this stage of mystic mentality as *prelogical*.

Here the author comes out with a forcible critique of Tylor's doctrine of the soul as a double. He shows that the belief commonly held by primitive

peoples is not in one double but in a multiplicity of souls which often are in a mystic *rapport* with each other, but coexist and do not merge into one individuality. The concept of a single soul belongs to a later stage in mental development (pp. 92-93). Bruhl would like to see the term "animism" eliminated from discussions of primitive mentality, in favor perhaps of the term "dynamism," a sort of continuum of mystic spiritual forces, an *Allbeseelung*. If we add that these mystic forces are supposed to be latent rather than constantly active (p. 145), the term *dynamism* appears to stand for what has variously been designated as *wakan*, *orenda*, *fadi*, etc. It certainly belongs to the class of concepts covered by Marett's tabou-mana formula.

Passing now to the operation of primitive mentality Bruhl finds that its relative exemption from the laws of logic is reflected in its being non-analytical. "Des préperceptions, des préconceptions, des préliaisons, on pourrait presque dire des préraisonnements," such are the determining elements of its functions. The question arises: How is it that primitive mentality, although relatively free from the regulative precepts of logic, is yet so markedly fixed and definite? The answer is found in the uniformity of the social structure to which the mentality of any given group corresponds (p. 115).

The author now passes to more specific characterizations. Memory must needs play a dominant role in primitive life. While the contents of our minds consist mainly of a small number of concepts classificatory of experience, the mind of the primitive man is crammed with a host of complex and heterogeneous memory-images which do not lend themselves to any logical sifting or rearrangement. Bruhl cites in confirmation of his proposition the great richness of vocabularies and the grammatical complexity of primitive languages (p. 123). The remarkable versatility and exactness of memory among savages is illustrated by a number of ethnographic examples (pp. 117-122). Abstraction, generalization, classification, are not indeed foreign to primitive mentality, but the features of experience which form the new material of those higher processes are not the objective features which lie at the root of the corresponding processes of our own mentality. Thus the mere resemblance of an image to an object leaves the primitive mind almost indifferent, but no sooner does there arise a complex of mystic associations than a bond is established between the two phenomena and they are united in an abstract concept of a mystic character (pp. 126-7). We shall return further on to some other features of this section of the work.

In Part II Bruhl sets out to test the propositions enunciated in the preceding sections, at the hand of primitive languages and systems of numera-

tion. Strangely enough the author excludes from his survey an examination of grammar, restricting himself to vocabularies and syntax. The common occurrence of multiple plurals in primitive languages indicates that the tendency is rather to express specific types of plurality than the idea of plurality as such. Noting the prevalence in many primitive languages of local adverbs, of suffixes and prefixes indicating exact position in space, etc., the author feels justified in declaring that the categories of position, and of distance, in space, are as important elements in the "representations" of primitive peoples as the categories of time and causality are with us (p. 165). This applies also to the many devices employed in these languages to designate the detailed form of objects, their size, manner of motion, etc. (p. 167). Bruhl analyzes gesture language and draws a close parallel between the categories therein expressed and those of primitive languages, particularly those devices for the designation of color, volume, degree, pain, satisfaction, which the author describes as "vocal gestures," *Laubilder* (p. 183). Thus Bruhl arrives at the idea of "concept-images" which, in his opinion, dominate primitive mentality (p. 190). Bruhl warns against the inference that the particularization of terms and the tendency towards precise expression of minute details, which are characteristic of primitive languages, were due to any conscious effort of attention. The real cause of this phenomenon lies in the fact that "image concepts" required either manual or oral gestures in order to be expressed in language (p. 197). The mystic character of words as such, and the part they play in primitive practices, are briefly commented upon (pp. 199-203).

In dealing with systems of numeration Bruhl draws attention to the common but erroneous opinion that the limitation of separate words for numbers to three or four indicates an inability to conceive pluralities of a higher order. Numerous experiences with primitive peoples show that the savage may and does have a very precise idea of the number of animals or objects with which he is concerned, although he may not be able to count beyond three. But here again the concept of number is not differentiated from the things counted (pp. 205-6). The same is true of those numerous cases where parts of the body are used for counting (pp. 210-219). In the instance of the Tsimshian who have seven sets of numbers used in counting seven categories of objects the author sees a confirmation of the point made about multiple plurals. As plurality there, so number here, is expressed not abstractly but in relation to the specific objects concerned (pp. 222 *et seq.*). Mystic numbers are discussed at some length (pp. 235-257).

Part III (pp. 261-421) is devoted to a detailed description and analysis of those practices of primitive peoples in which collective representations

are particularly prominent. The author passes in review the magic ceremonies performed before, during, or after the chase or fishing expedition. War-ceremonies, the *intichiuma* performances, the practice of couvade; the beliefs and customs connected with sickness, death, divination, magic, initiation, are in turn described and analyzed. The illustrations are taken from tribes well known to ethnologists and need not detain us.

Part IV is short and may perhaps be regarded as an outline of a work yet to come. Here the author tries to bridge the gap between primitive and civilized mentality, by indicating in most general terms the processes of differentiation and analysis by which the mental complexes of primitive man are transformed into our concepts.

When the author draws a sharp line between the mental processes of the primitive man and those of the civilized, he seems at first to be on the right track. When he emphasizes that the interpretations of the differences disclosed must lie mainly along the line of the influence of collective mentality upon the mind of the individual, we are still ready to follow him. But the author goes further. He asserts that the entire mental picture of the material world is different in the primitive and the civilized. "Primitive man," says Bruhl, "does not perceive anything as we do. As the social *milieu* in which he lives differs from ours, and precisely because it so differs, the external world he perceives differs also from that perceived by us. True enough, he has the same senses as we have . . . and the same cerebral structure. But we must remember that collective 'representations' enter into each one of his perceptions. No matter what object presents itself to him, it is always indissolubly connected with certain mystic properties, and when the primitive man perceives the object he does not, in fact, separate it from these mystic properties" (p. 37). At another place we read: "For primitive peoples reality itself is mystical. No being, object, or natural phenomenon appears in their collective 'representations' as it does to us. Almost all we see in these phenomena, escapes them or is indifferent to them. And again, they read into the phenomena much that is quite foreign to us" (p. 31). Similarly on p. 76: "All reality is mystical as is all action and consequently also all perception." Here Bruhl goes decidedly too far. True, mystic associations hold the mentality of the savage in their grip and there is scarcely an action, an object, or an event, that *may* not become replete with magic content. We may even admit that those objects or activities which are most intimately associated with sacred ceremonies or social functions become so thoroughly imbued with the atmosphere of these significant occasions that they can never appear to the savage in their objectivity. But from such facts there is a far cry to the assertion that mystic associations

are in primitive society all-pervading, that they transform the face of the material world. The savage decorates his house with symbolic figures, he uses magic devices to insure the success of the chase, he fights his foe with arrows as well as incantations, he does on certain occasions regard himself or his clansmen as animals, etc. But to all this there is another side. The ingenuity in design and the skill in execution displayed in the wooden house of British Columbia, or in the snow-dwelling of the Eskimo, are not bred of the magic significance of these habitations or of the parts that go to their making. The nets, traps, snares, used by the Kwakiutl to catch or entrap the game he feeds on, bear evidence to other than mystical tendencies in the minds of their inventors. When an enemy falls in the heat of battle, the savage may ascribe it to the assistance of spirits as much as or more than to the action of his arrows; but when he chisels the stone or bone point and carefully dips it into the deadly liquid we may well believe that the principle of causality is not dormant in his mind. The same applies to the savage's conception of space, no matter how often particular positions or directions may acquire magical significance (pp. 129-130), and to the words of his language, no matter how commonly they may resound with magic ring in divination, cure, or incantation (pp. 199-203). If our censure of Bruhl's argument is correct, some of the specific applications of his doctrine must also be taken exception to. Bruhl assumes that the savage does not distinguish an object from its picture or reflection because traditional collective "representations" introduce the same mystic elements into both perceptions (p. 44). And again in regard to the names of objects: "The name is mystical, as the image is mystical, because the perception of the object . . . is mystical" (p. 49). The shadow is similarly dealt with: "It is confused with the body because the perception of the shadow, like that of the body itself, its image or its name, is a mystic perception, of which the shadow as such . . . constitutes but one element among many" (p. 51).

As special instances of the author's theory these interpretations are consistent enough, but they do not flow naturally from an objective survey of the facts. It would indeed be remarkable if the savage were not struck by the purely objective resemblance in outline and manner of motion between an object or body and its reflection or shadow. The analogy of children and animals is here quite legitimate. When we remember the universal tendency of primitive man to read forms of animals or objects into rocks or clouds of but dimly suggestive configuration—and here surely naught but objective resemblance could determine the "mythological apperception"—it seems inconceivable that the infinitely more deceitful forms of the image and shadow should not have become united with the body or object by a

psychic bond of great stability. If so much be granted, we need not look further for the primary psychic cause of the ensuing confusions. As to specific developments, mystic associations must of course be recognized as eminently fitted to enhance these as many other distortions of reality.

There remains another and more fundamental point in which the author's position does not seem to me to be tenable. On p. 30 we read: "The collective representations of primitive men differ fundamentally from our ideas or concepts; nor are they their equivalents." "We are led to think," says Bruhl, "that primitive mentality does not obey exclusively the laws of our logic, nor laws that are of purely logical character" (p. 70). It is *prelogical*. It is not like our own thinking, governed by the law of contradiction (p. 79). Primitive mentality is thus constituted because it is dominated by collective "representations" which impose themselves upon the mental life of the individual (p. 16). The author is not indeed blind to the collective character of much in our own mentality. "In these societies of primitive groups," says he, "as much or even more than among ourselves, the entire mental life of the individual is profoundly socialized" (p. 112). Nor is the occasional logical character of individual thinking entirely overlooked. "As an individual, and in so far as he thinks and acts independently, if that be possible, of these collective 'representations,' the primitive man will generally feel, judge, and behave in conformity with our expectations. But from this it does not follow that his mental activity always obeys the same laws as our own. In fact, in so far as it is collective, it has its own peculiar laws of which the first and the most general is the law of participation" (pp. 79-180). The last two statements, however, and one or two others of similar import, stand quite isolated and do not fall in with the main line of argument pursued throughout the work.

The author's central thesis, if I understand him correctly, consists in the contrast he draws between the prelogical character of primitive mentality and the logical character of our own, between the collective "representations" of primitive society and the concepts of civilized man. In this juxtaposition lies, I believe, the main error of the author's position. It hardly needs emphasizing that our own mentality is thoroughly saturated with collective elements. What Bruhl says about the primitive individual in his relations to the social *milieu* applies also to the civilized one. The beliefs and convictions of the one, as those of the other, are generally predetermined and fixed before he knows anything about them. As to the law of contradiction it is being sinned against in either case, although not to an equal degree, in the content of the beliefs as well as in their correlations. Moreover, much that has at one time been logically and consciously elaborated be-

comes among ourselves part of our social inheritance, and in that context assumes an extra-logical if not an illogical character. To go even further: Bruhl points out, I think justly, that, in dealing with primitive "representations" or perceptions, the real problem is one of dissociation and not of association. The psychic complexes arise on an unconscious background as direct and indecomposable apperceptions. Later, with the rise of a more analytical mentality, it is by a process of dissociation that the more purely intellectual nucleus reveals itself. I think that a process not incomparable to the above takes place in the mind of many, and in a wider sense each of one of us, when, with approaching maturity, we try to analyze and intellectualize the incoherent and heterogeneous contents of our mental selves. And, on the other hand, our logical processes and concepts are not without analoga in the mentality of primitive man. The daily life and activities of every savage are to some extent guided by logic, by *our* logic, and give evidence of such guidance, while the mental achievements of exceptional individuals whose presence in primitive communities is not inconspicuous, often reveal logical powers of no mean order. As to the general character of primitive thinking, Bruhl errs rather than Spencer and Tylor, who believed that, if we grant the savage his premises, his conclusions are rational.

The terms of the author's central juxtaposition are thus seen not to be legitimately comparable. In the light of the contrast between our conceptual thinking and the collective "representations" of the savage, the gap between the two mentalities appears wider than the facts warrant. The profoundly socialized character of our mental life is not given due weight, nor is the logical element of the savage's mental make-up. As a consequence, opportunities for fertile comparisons are neglected. By comparing the two mentalities in their collective aspects the author could hardly have failed to discover some interesting similarities and differences, many of which would no doubt have served to illustrate the author's own principle of the correlation of mentality with social structure. And again, an analysis of the primitive man as logician, when put side by side with one of us, would bring home the fact that the psychic unity of mankind extends beyond the domain of psycho-physical structure, to the fundamental processes of logical thinking.

Notwithstanding the short-comings I have tried to lay bare in this critique, the essential solidity of Bruhl's work commands respect. It deserves, in fact, to be classed as a signal contribution to the theory of ethnology. The following are a few of the points which seem to me to be particularly well taken.

One negative characteristic distinguishes Bruhl's work sharply from many

other treatises on the same subject, viz.: the absence of any attempt to arrange his material in an evolutionary series of stages of development. The results are striking. If we glance at a book like Tylor's *Primitive Culture* or Spencer's *Principles of Sociology*, vol. I, part I, the artificiality in the arrangement of data becomes at once apparent; we recognize that the moulding of ethnological facts into a genetic chain is based on hypothetical psychological postulates. A similar perusal of the table of contents of Westermarck's *Origin and Development of Moral Ideas*, shows that his classification is made from a point of view which is partly objective, partly psychological. We are thus led to suspect that the facts presented will not be legitimately comparable, and the reading of the book vindicates the suspicion. A later work of a much higher order, Wundt's *Völkerpsychologie*, is not free from a similar methodological error. Again an analysis of the table of contents of e. g., vol. IV, will suffice: the formal arrangement reveals a logical sequence; and, if one proceeds further, the mirror thus held to ethnic facts is seen to reflect a distorted picture.

Now, if we exclude the last part of Bruhl's work,—a procedure justified by the fragmentary character of that section—we notice that he approaches his subject with much greater open-mindedness than did the above authors. The treatise consists of a set of coordinated analyses which supply evidence confirmatory of the author's hypothesis. No attempt is made to pigeon-hole the material. What is lost in width is easily gained in depth. Moreover, Bruhl is thus enabled to make legitimate and forcible use of judiciously sifted ethnological material, without venturing on the slippery ground of survivals, degenerations, parallelisms, missing links, etc.

The able handling of linguistic data deserves particular notice, for this is, so far as I know, the first work of a general character which does not represent the languages of primitive peoples as poverty-stricken in vocabulary and as totally devoid of all means of expressing ideas with precision.

Frazer in his *Golden Bough*, King in *The Supernatural*, Schulze in his *Psychologie der Naturvölker*,—to single out a few out of many similar works—deal with the mentality of primitive peoples; yet the above works may be not incorrectly described as treatises on primitive religion or magic, or both. Here again Bruhl's work constitutes a departure. In dealing with primitive mentality he does not permit himself to be swayed by the, so to say, accidental identification of that subject, in literature, with the cognate but distinct subject of primitive religion. Primitive mentality for Bruhl is primitive *Weltanschauung* in its objective and psychological aspects, of which religious beliefs constitute but one phase. The term *Weltanschauung* itself, however, does not really tally with the author's point of view, and he might perhaps endorse the substitution of the term *Welteinfühlung*.

This brings us to another important point in the author's position. He takes a firm stand against the rationalistic interpretation of beliefs. In the production of the psychic content of an individual mind, intellectual and conscious elements play but a small part; emotional and unconscious elements, on the other hand, are the dominant factors. This principle, which flows as a natural consequence from what we know of human psychology, is no longer in its infancy; it continues, however, to be sadly neglected; and among the worst sinners against it are some of those who herald it most vociferously. Bruhl's savage does not ask questions, he is not puzzled, he does not analyze nature, nor unify his experience. The part he plays in the production of his own psychic make-up is mostly passive and receptive. The real dynamic factor, acting at first through unconscious channels but backed presently by a powerful emotional setting, is the social *milieu*. Here again Bruhl's argumentation is on a high level. True, in his insistence on the social factor, he is perhaps least original. Hubert and Mauss in their "Esquisse d'une Théorie générale de la Magie" (*L'Année Sociologique*, 1902-3) and Durkheim and Mauss in "De quelques formes primitives de classification" (*ibid.*, 1901-2) announced a point of view which Bruhl seems to follow rather closely. The author candidly admits that he has not succeeded in throwing much light on the relation of the individual to the group. This notwithstanding, his insistence on the social factor can but be welcomed, while his idea of the correlation between types of mentality and types of social structure, is highly suggestive.

A. A. GOLDENWEISER.

With a Prehistoric People: The Akikúyu of British East Africa; Being some Account of the Method of Life and Mode of Thought found existent amongst a Nation on its first Contact with European Civilisation. By W. SCORESBY ROUTLEDGE, M.A. (Oxon.), and KATHERINE ROUTLEDGE (born Pease), Som. Coll. (Oxon); M.A. (Trin. Coll., Dublin). London: Edward Arnold (Publisher to the India Office), 1910. $9\frac{1}{2} \times 6\frac{1}{4}$, pp. xxxii, 392; 136 plates and a map. (21s. net.)

This work on the Kikuyu is one of the relatively few recent books on East Africa which form a contribution of lasting value to ethnographic literature, and accordingly requires a somewhat extended notice. The portion of the Kikuyu tribe visited by the authors occupies the highlands bounded on the north by the equator, on the west by the Aberdare Range, on the south by the plains of Athi, while the country to the east is dominated by Mt Kenya. Beyond the Aberdare Range there live the Masai, hereditary enemies of the Kikuyu, and to the southeast stretches the country of the